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Some recent records of birds around Islamabad, Pakistan

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This short communication gives details of the most interesting bird observations made during several stays in Islamabad, Pakistan, between 10 December 1995 and 9 March 1996. Coverage of the area was not continuous as we were in Pakistan primarily for the purpose of carrying out surveys of Western Tragopan in Palas, Indus Kohistan. Most effort was concentrated on Rawal Lake and the surrounding agricultural areas, shrubland and woodland. The Margalla Hills were visited on a number of occasions, mainly during the first month of our stay; most attention was given to the Daman-e-koh ravine and the woodland that runs from the base of the ravine to the Faisal Mosque. Brief visits were also made to the Islamabad rubbish dump, and the Margalla Hills ridge, both on 2 February. During most of our stays in Islamabad we were based at the Dreamland Motel, situated close to Rawal dam, and the woodland behind the hotel was also visited regularly.

FERRUGINOUS POCHARD *Aythya nyroca* One drake was seen at Rawal Lake on 27 January, and two drakes there on 30 January. Ward (1994) considered this species to be a vagrant to the Islamabad area.

SMEW *Mergellus albellus* One female was seen at Rawal Lake on 31 January. Roberts (1991) considered this species to be scarce in Pakistan, and stated that it was an irregular winter visitor. Ward (1994) noted that it was a vagrant to the Islamabad area, with only one or two sightings at Rawal Lake.

FULVOUS-BREASTED WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos macei* Recorded regularly from the Margalla Hills, with a maximum count of four on 3 January. One was seen in the woodland along the western edge of Rawal Lake on 14 December. Roberts (1991) considered this species to be rare in Pakistan. Ward (1994) stated that it was a vagrant to the Islamabad area.

SIND WOODPECKER *Dendrocopos assimilis* A male was noted in the woodland at the bottom of the Daman-e-koh ravine on 2 January, and two males and a female in the same area on 20 January. Also recorded from Rawal Lake, with a female in the woodland on the northern

edge of the lake on 4 January. Ward (1994) found this species to be a vagrant to the Islamabad area.

CRESTED KINGFISHER *Megaceryle lugubris* First recorded at Rawal Lake on 4 January, but thereafter up to three were seen regularly. Singles in the woodland behind the Dreamland Motel on 5 February and on 24 February, may have involved some of the birds from Rawal Lake. Roberts (1991) stated that this species was a rare resident in Pakistan, with only a few records for Rawal Lake (one in 1982, two in 1983, and one in 1987). Ward (1994) considered this species to be a vagrant to the Islamabad area.

EURASIAN EAGLE OWL *Bubo bubo* What was probably the same individual was seen on three dates just south of Rawal Lake, on 3, 4 and 5 February. On each occasion the bird was disturbed from its roost under bushes on an open rocky slope. Ward (1994) stated that this species was a vagrant to the Islamabad area.

BROWN CRAKE *Amaurornis akool* Singles were recorded regularly from around Rawal Lake. Roberts (1991) found this species to be a rare and localized resident, with one record from Rawal Lake (two or three birds in July-August 1987). Ward (1994) also considered it to be a vagrant to the Islamabad area.

MEW GULL *Larus canus* One first-winter bird was seen at Rawal Lake on 22 January, and presumably the same bird was noted again on 24 January. Roberts (1991) considered this species to be a rare vagrant to Pakistan, with only five records (including one at Rawal Lake in the 1986-1987 winter). However, Vittery (1994) provided details of the first record from Pakistan: a bird at Rasul barrage on 27 January 1974, and also mentioned one at Rawal Lake on 17 February 1974. Ward (1994) also considered the species to be a vagrant.

PALLID HARRIER *Circus macrourus* A second-year bird flew west along the Margalla Hills ridge on 2 February. Ward (1994) stated that this species was a vagrant to the Islamabad area.

CHESTNUT-BELLIED ROCK THRUSH *Monticola rufiventris* A female was recorded at the bottom of the Daman-e-koh ravine on 3 January, and another female on a rocky hillside just south of Rawal Lake on 31 January. Roberts (1992) stated that this species was rare in Pakistan further west than Murree. It was not included in Ward's (1994) checklist of the birds of Islamabad.

ORANGE-HEADED THRUSH *Zoothera citrina* One or two birds were seen on four dates in the woodland at the bottom of the Daman-e-koh ravine in the Margalla Hills, and one in the woodland along the west side of Rawal Lake on 13 December. This species was previously known to occur in the Margalla Hills (Roberts 1992, Ward 1994), but Ward did not list it for Rawal.

SCALY THRUSH *Zoothera dauma* One was noted in the woodland along the west side of Rawal Lake on 13 December, and one in the woodland at the bottom of the Daman-e-koh ravine in the Margalla Hills on 29 January. These may well constitute the first records for the Islamabad area. Roberts (1992) stated that this species was scarce in Pakistan, and he explicitly mentioned that it had never been recorded in the Islamabad area. It was not included in Ward's (1994) list.

RUFIOUS-BELLIED NILTAVA *Niltava sundara* Single males were noted in the woodland along the north and west sides of Rawal Lake on 13 and 14 December, and at the bottom of the Daman-e-koh ravine in the Margalla Hills on 3 January. Roberts (1992) considered this species to be scarce in Pakistan, and mentioned that neither he nor D. Corfield had come across it in the Islamabad/Rawalpindi area. Ward (1994) stated that it was a vagrant (winter visitor) to Islamabad.

WHITE-TAILED RUBYTHROAT *Luscinia pectoralis* Singles were recorded regularly at the base of the Daman-e-koh ravine in the Margalla Hills. Roberts (1992) referred to the rarity of this species in Islamabad, and made special note of one recorded on the ridge of the Margalla Hills in March 1978. Ward (1994) also considered it to be a vagrant to the Islamabad area.

ASIAN PIED STARLING *Sturnus contra* One was seen near the the Rawal dam on 20 January and, presumably the same individual, again on 30 January. This may well constitute the first record for the Islamabad area, and the westernmost record of this species. Roberts (1992) regarded this species as rare and local in Pakistan, with several records from the Lahore area.

GRACEFUL PRINIA *Prinia gracilis* A few were noted on the north side of Rawal Lake on 13 December. This species was not included in Ward's (1994) list of the birds of Islamabad.

BROOKS'S LEAF WARBLER *Phylloscopus subviridis* Singles were recorded infrequently at the Margalla Hills and around Rawal Lake. Roberts (1992) stated that this species did not winter regularly in the Islamabad area. Ward (1994) listed it as a passage migrant.

RED-BILLED LEIOTHRIX *Leiothrix lutea* One or two flocks, totalling 15-20 birds, were noted on several dates in December and January in the Daman-e-koh ravine in the Margalla Hills. Roberts (1992) thought that this species was a vagrant to Pakistan, with less than five records of single birds (one from Margalla). Ward (1994) considered it to be a winter visitor to Pakistan.

RUSSET SPARROW *Passer rutilans* A flock of up to 40 was recorded on several dates near Rawal Lake, and several were noted in the woodland behind the Dreamland Motel. Ward (1994) stated that this species was a vagrant (winter visitor) to the Islamabad area.

OLIVE-BACKED PIPIT *Anthus hodgsoni* A flock of at least 15 was seen and photographed in the woodland behind the Dreamland Motel (near Rawal Lake, Islamabad) on several dates from 29 January. This was the first record for Pakistan (see Drijvers *et al.* in this issue).

CHAFFINCH *Fringilla coelebs* Small numbers were recorded regularly from wooded areas. Roberts (1992) considered it to be an erratic winter visitor to Pakistan. Ward (1994) considered it to be a vagrant (winter visitor) to Islamabad.

PINK-BROWED ROSEFINCH *Carpodacus rodochrous* Three females were noted near the base of the Daman-e-koh ravine in the Margalla Hills on 20 January, and three females were also seen along the Margalla Hills ridge on 2 February. Roberts (1992) found that it was an irregular winter visitor to Margalla and Ward (1994) considered it to be a vagrant (winter visitor) to the Islamabad area.

PINE BUNTING *Emberiza leucocephalos* A flock of 11 birds (including at least four males) went to roost in the reedbeds at the north-west corner of Rawal Lake on 26 January. It was not listed for the Islamabad area by Ward (1994).

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